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New York

President:	Mr. Lambertini	(Italy)
Members:	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Mr. Llorentty Soliz
	China	Mr. Zhang Dianbin
	Egypt	Mr. Moustafa
	Ethiopia	Mr. Demissie
	France	Mrs. Gueguen
	Japan	Mr. Bessho
	Kazakhstan	Mr. Alimzhanov
	Russian Federation	Mr. Ilitchev
	Senegal	Mr. Ciss
	Sweden	Mr. Skoog
	Ukraine	Mr. Vitrenko
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Allen
	United States of America	Ms. Sison
	Uruguay	Mr. Bermudez Alvarez

Agenda

The situation in Burundi

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The meeting was called to order at 11.05 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in Burundi

The President: In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of Burundi to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Mr. Michel Kafando, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Burundi, and His Excellency Mr. Jürg Lauber, Permanent Representative of Switzerland to the United Nations, in his capacity as Chair of the Burundi configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I now give the floor to Mr. Michel Kafando.

Mr. Kafando (*spoke in French*): At the outset, allow me to congratulate you, Mr. President, on assuming the presidency of the Council for the month of November, and to take this opportunity to greet the members of the Council.

In my briefing, I intend, on the one hand, to report on the activities that I have carried out since the Council's previous consideration of the question of Burundi (see S/PV.8013) and, on the other hand, to take stock of recent developments in the matter. The mission assigned to the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Burundi is very clear. It is to support the efforts of the region — in other words, those of the mediator and the facilitator — in order to advance the negotiations whose purpose, I recall, is to implement the inclusive inter-Burundian dialogue. That is what I have been doing by meeting with the Burundian authorities and political actors, meeting with the Burundian opposition and representatives of civil society — including those who are in exile — and meeting with African Heads of State and partners of Burundi.

My first discussions with the mediator, President Yoweri Museveni of Uganda, took place in August in Entebbe. They focused on the urgent need to convene a regional mini-summit in order to assess the progress of the negotiations and, where possible, to coordinate decisions. At the conclusion of our discussions, the mediator informed me of his intention to meet with President Pierre Nkurunziza. I know that he recently sent a special envoy carrying a message to his counterpart in Burundi. I also met a number of African leaders, always with the aim of raising their awareness and requesting their support, given their ties to the Burundian authorities.

My meeting with the Burundian opposition abroad took place in Brussels on 14 October, and brought together the leaders of the National Council for Respect for the Arusha Agreement and the Rule of Law (CNARED) as well as civil-society leaders in exile. At this first meeting, I primarily explained the purpose of my mission, which is chiefly a good-offices mission that seeks, in support of regional efforts, to bring closer together the positions of the Government and the opposition with a view to promoting inclusive inter-Burundian dialogue. My visit to Brussels also gave me the opportunity to have discussions with the Foreign Minister of Belgium and some representatives of the European Union on the prevailing situation in Burundi. My return to Bujumbura was an opportunity to canvass the views of two very influential moral authorities of the Catholic Church of Burundi, namely, the bishops of Bujumbura and Gitega.

My meeting on 2 November with the Ombudsman focused on the discussions he had had with the opposition abroad in Helsinki and on the adoption by the Government of Burundi of the new revised Constitution. The Ombudsman assured me that, apart from the decision not to take into account previous terms served and the seven-year term of the presidential term proposed in the Constitution, the Government has respected all the other provisions of the Arusha Agreement. All these activities that I was involved in were contained in a report to the facilitator, with whom I met on 3 November in Dar es Salaam.

Based on the overall summary, the facilitator, in agreement with the mediator and the Burundian Government, has decided to convene, on 27 November, in Arusha, a dialogue session between the representatives of the Government and all the other Burundian stakeholders, including, of course, the opposition in exile. These meetings will take place from 27 November to 8 December, as I said, in Arusha. We have been informed that the CNARED is not disposed participate. A summit of Heads of State of the Community of East African States is envisaged for

January 2018, which, inter alia, will have to evaluate the outcomes of these meetings.

With regard to the situation on the ground in Burundi, I was in Bujumbura two weeks ago, and everything appeared to be calm, apart from some expressions of outrage against the International Criminal Court's decision to open preliminary investigations into crimes against humanity committed since 2015 in the country. The protests also denounced reports of human rights violations, including allegations of arrests, imprisonment, enforced disappearances, inhuman and degrading treatment, restrictions on freedom of association, intimidation and even hate speech. The Burundian authorities have already turned their attention to the upcoming elections, although the issue of inclusive dialogue has not yet found a proper resolution.

In conclusion, the United Nations remains obligated, regardless of the difficulties ahead, to continue its good-offices mission, standing shoulder to shoulder with the subregion, in order to extricate Burundi from the current crisis. We remain convinced that the political process is the only way of untangling the Burundian crisis.

Finally, with regard to relations between United Nations and Burundi, the relationship seems to me to be moving in the right direction. Indeed, the United Nations Secretariat and the Government are continuing negotiations on a draft headquarters agreement. It should be noted, however, that the Government has not yet taken the steps necessary to implement its decision to fully cooperate with the Human Rights Council and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. Negotiations are also ongoing with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights.

The foregoing represents the main facts that I have noted since the question of Burundi was discussed during my last briefing to the Security Council on the subject.

The President: I thank Mr. Kafando for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Lauber.

Mr. Lauber: Mr. President, on behalf of the members of the Burundi configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC), I would like to thank you for inviting me to brief the Security Council and for the continuous constructive cooperation between the Council and the configuration. Members of the configuration noted with appreciation the positive reference to the PBC contained in the Council's presidential statement S/PRST/2017/13, of 2 August.

As per established practice, the following statement has been submitted to and approved by the members of the configuration, including the country concerned, Burundi.

Since my last briefing to the Council on 26 July (see S/PV.8013), I have had a number of meetings in New York, Addis Ababa and Geneva on Burundi in my capacity as Chair of the configuration. During the high-level week of the General Assembly, I met with His Excellency Mr. Alain Aimé Nyamitwe, Burundi's Minister of External Relations and International Cooperation, and we discussed the continuation of the socioeconomic dialogue. Minister Nyamitwe confirmed that the next round of the dialogue will include additional partners, as agreed at the latesst retreat, held in Bujumbura on 12 July. Also during the high-level week, I met the Secretary General of the East African Community (EAC), Mr. Libérat Mfumukeko; the European Union Senior Coordinator for the Great Lakes, Mr. Koen Vervaeke; and the Special Envoy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to the Great Lakes Region, Ms. Katja Lasseur.

On 12 October, I had a meeting with His Excellency Mr. Benjamin Mkapa, the former President of Tanzania and the EAC Facilitator for Burundi, as we were both in Geneva on that day.

From 25 to 28 October, I used the opportunity of a visit to Addis Ababa to discuss the situation in Burundi with the Permanent Secretary of Burundi's Foreign Ministry, His Excellency Mr. Jean de Dieu Ndikumana; the African Union (AU) Commissioner for Peace and Security, His Excellency Mr. Smaïl Chergui; the new AU Special Representative for the Great Lakes Region, His Excellency Mr. Basile Ikouebe; and the Head of the United Nations Office to the African Union, His Excellency Mr. Haile Menkerios. While in Addis, I also met the Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, Under-Secretary-General Vera Songwe, as well as experts from the AU, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and members of the diplomatic community.

On 8 November, I updated the configuration on my activities and on recent developments in Burundi. The new United Nations Resident Coordinator in Burundi,

Mr. Garry Conille, participated in that meeting of the configuration. He characterized the situation in Burundi as one of chronic vulnerability and informed Member States about United Nations efforts aimed at strengthening the resilience of the population.

Representatives from the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees highlighted the gravity of the humanitarian situation and indicated that the number of persons in need of humanitarian assistance will possibly soon reach 6 million people, that is, over half of the population. They noted a funding gap for the humanitarian response plan of 50 per cent, as well as for the Regional Refugee Response Plan, which is currently funded at only 19 per cent.

In the subsequent discussion, the members of the configuration expressed support for the engagement of the configuration, namely, for its efforts to draw attention to the deteriorating socioeconomic and humanitarian situation. Member States reiterated their unequivocal support for the EAC-led dialogue process, although some of them expressed concern over the lack of progress in the process. The human rights situation was described by several delegations as concerning. In that regard, the Permanent Representative of Burundi, Ambassador Albert Shingiro, indicated that the negotiations between his Government and OHCHR about the outstanding memorandum of understanding were in their final phase.

A number of representatives enquired about the prospects of an amendment of the Constitution, and they stressed their concern about the potential impact on the spirit of the Arusha Accord. Other representatives noted that amending the Constitution is part of Burundi's sovereign rights. The Permanent Representative of Burundi stressed that this was an internal matter and reassured PBC members that changes to the Constitution would not be detrimental to the spirit of the Arusha Accord.

From my interactions in recent months, I am drawing the following conclusions:

First, with regard to the political dialogue, President Mkapa remains committed to facilitating the EAC-led political dialogue and he continues to enjoy support inside and outside the region. At the same time, the facilitation remains challenging. While I heard disappointment regarding the lack of progress in the dialogue process, I was encouraged to see that Secretary-General Guterres, as well as the members of the East African Community, the African Union and the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region continue to pay considerable attention to the situation in Burundi. As the Special Envoy just mentioned, the holding of the next Arusha round has been tentatively scheduled for late November. I would like to encourage Burundi's political stakeholders to fully commit to the continuation of the EAC-led process and to constructively participate in the planned session.

Secondly, with regard to the socioeconomic situation, national and international actors continue to highlight challenges in the areas of food security, health, education and energy. Against this background, international partners are increasingly concentrating on strengthening the resilience of Burundi's population and on their immediate humanitarian needs. On 20 October, for example, the European Union announced a new population resilience support programme, with a volume of €95 million.

Thirdly, on human rights, in my contacts I continued to hear reports about human rights violations in Burundi, as well as regrets about the outstanding memorandums of understanding with the OHCHR and the African Union for their work in Burundi. In my meetings with the representatives of the Government of Burundi, I continued to encourage them to swiftly conclude these agreements.

The human rights situation has been discussed, as the Assembly knows, in the Human Rights Council in mid-September and by the Third Committee of the General Assembly on 28 October. As is well known, at its thirty-sixth session in Geneva, the Human Rights Council adopted two resolutions on Burundi; one extends the mandate of the Commission of Inquiry for one year; the other asks the High Commissioner to appoint an expert who will provide technical assistance and capacity-building to the Government in the area of human rights.

Fourthly, with regard to the question of refugees, many of my interlocutors pointed to the return of refugees from Tanzania to Burundi. On 31 August in Dar es Salaam, the Governments of Tanzania and Burundi and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees agreed to assist the voluntary repatriation of 12,900 refugees who had by then registered their desire to return. At the latest configuration meeting,

Ms. Wafaa Saeed, the Deputy Director of the OCHA Coordination and Response Division, underlined the fact that the voluntary character of these repatriations is essential and must be respected in the current movement of return. As for reintegration, Ms. Saeed said:

> "There is a strong need to improve the socioeconomic and human rights situation in Burundi to ensure the sustainability of returns and reintegration at the community level, both for refugees and those returning from internal displacement within Burundi."

In the subsequent discussion, it was also underlined that it is essential to safeguard the civilian character of refugee camps in accordance with the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees.

In view of this situation, I suggested to the members of the PBC Burundi configuration that they focus on the following four points for the time being.

First, national, regional and international actors should continue to fully support the mediation efforts undertaken by President Museveni and President Mkapa on behalf of the EAC.

Secondly, while the ongoing efforts on the political track remain important, the forthcoming election cycle of 2020 requires increasing attention from all of us. I believe that some kind of road map is required, defining the necessary conditions for free, fair, peaceful and democratic elections, as well as the necessary steps to get there. I also believe that the PBC should be able to contribute, in one way or another, to such an endeavour.

Thirdly, the socioeconomic conversation must complement these efforts with a focus on addressing the needs of the population, as well as existing obstacles for cooperation. Such conversations with the Government need to involve additional partners who were not able to participate in our Bujumbura retreat of 12 July. I remain committed to engaging on the socioeconomic situation not only with the Government and Burundi's main donors, but also with the private sector, African economic actors and academia.

Fourthly, the question of truth and national reconciliation should receive more attention and support. This will be one of the issues I am planning to raise during my next visit to Burundi, which is tentatively scheduled for early 2018.

The President: I thank Mr. Lauber for his briefing.

I now give the floor to those Council members who wish to make statements.

Mr. Llorentty Soliz (Plurinational State of Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): Bolivia would like to thank the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General, Mr. Michael Kafando, and Ambassador of Switzerland, Mr. Jürg Lauber, in his capacity as Chair of the Burundi configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission, for their briefings.

Bolivia values and supports the efforts of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General to pursue the inter-Burundi dialogue in an inclusive environment. In this regard, we see as significant progress the recent meeting in Bujumbura among Mr. Kafando and the Burundian authorities, the Ombudsman, the Archbishops of Bujumbura and Gitega, and the accredited diplomatic corps in the country, as well as the Special Envoy's visit to Dar es Salaam in Tanzania.

Bolivia also encourages all parties to support the mediation being carried out by former President of Tanzania Mr. Benjamin Mkapa and by President of Uganda Mr. Yoweri Museveni, in accordance with the Arusha Accord, which must continue to be the cornerstone of this process. In the same way, we call on the parties to implement the road map proposed by Mr. Mkapa in order to achieve consensus and generate the conditions necessary for a peaceful environment during the upcoming elections to be held in 2020.

With that in mind, we believe that inclusive dialogue is a prerequisite to solving the crisis. We therefore call on all parties to engage in dialogue and to take steps to restore trust and promote national reconciliation. It is also important that the parties implement the agreements and especially that they work together in order to reach a negotiated political settlement. In this connection, we acknowledge the efforts and work of the East African Community (EAC), the Special Envoy of the African Union, the President of the Burundi configuration in the Peacebuilding Commission and the United Nations country team.

We encourage them to continue with that work and to strive to coordinate their efforts in order to achieve better cooperation. We reiterate that all efforts should take place in the context of respect for the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Burundi.

We appreciate what was stated in the the communiqué of 19 October of this year at the seventh

Summit of Heads of State the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, which mentions the improvement of the security situation in Burundi and the support of the Summit for the inter-Burundian dialogue led by the EAC. In that regard, we note the efforts of the Burundi Government to re-establish peace after the 2015 crisis, and we highlight the fact that the security situation in the country has improved. We encourage the Government to continue to build a peaceful environment that contributes to the stability and development of its country in the context of respect for human rights.

In addition, we highlight the cooperation of the Government of Burundi with the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General during his visit. We also underscore the fact that both parties have designated ad hoc teams to negotiate and to finalize the cooperation agreement between the Government of Burundi and the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General in Bujumbura. We also recognize the efforts of the Government and the Ombudsman in raising awareness with regard to the refugees. In that regard, we welcome the voluntary return of 15,000 refugees to Burundi.

We encourage the international community to continue to step up the funding of the humanitarian response plan in Burundi. We call on countries that have imposed sanctions to consider lifting them, since the sanctions have proven to have negative consequences for the lives of groups in situations of vulnerability, such as women and children. Moreover, it should be taken into account that unilateral sanctions constitute a violation of international law. The sanctions have a negative impact on the implementation of the Goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. I reiterate that they violate the Charter of the United Nations.

In conclusion, we believe that the full and committed involvement of the international community, and of all parties, is of the utmost importance given the complexity of the process. In that regard, it is vital to continue to consolidate the bases for achieving lasting stability in Burundi in the context of the purposes and principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations.

Mr. Bermúdez Álvarez (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me, first of all, to thank Mr. Michel Kafando, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Burundi, and Ambassador Jürg Lauber, Chair of the Burundi configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission, for their briefings.

Uruguay reiterates its concern about the political, humanitarian and human rights situation in Burundi, whose people are suffering from the devastating consequences of the crisis. We note the report of Special Envoy Kafando on the results of his recent visit to Burundi, which sought to help to relaunch inter-Burundian dialogue process. We also note his report on his meeting with the facilitator of the inter-Burundian dialogue, former President Benjamin William Mkapa. We reiterate our full support for his handling of the situation and encourage him in carrying out his work to continue to involve a broader range of interlocutors from both the Government and the opposition, as well as civil society.

In addition, we once again acknowlegde the tireless efforts of the regional and subregional bodies to overcome the stalemate in the political process in Burundi. At their most recent summits, both the African Union and the East African Community reaffirmed their full commitment to a peaceful solution to the crisis and underscored that dialogue was the only possible way forward.

It is also worth recalling the road map that was presented by facilitator Mkapa, which includes a series of specific steps to relaunch the political process and to generate conditions conducive to transparent, inclusive and peaceful elections in 2020.

In that regard, Uruguay particularly encourages the countries of the region to support Burundi in a unified and coordinated way. We also call on all Burundian parties to commit in good faith to the next stages of the dialogue process, expected in the coming weeks.

At the same time, we demand that all actors refrain from taking any step that could exacerbate the political and social tension in the country, thereby jeopardizing peace and stability and undermining the correct way forward for the dialogue process.

Uruguay cannot but reiterate its concern about the human rights situation in Burundi. In that regard, we strongly condemn each and every abuse and violation of human rights, whoever commits them, including cases of extrajudicial executions, sexual violence in the context of the political crisis, arrests and arbitrary detentions, and the harassment and intimidation of civil society organizations and journalists, as well as restrictions on fundamental freedoms.

In the light of that situation, we regret that the Government of Burundi has not resumed its cooperation with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNHCR) since that cooperation was suspended in mid-October 2016. We reiterate our call for the swift conclusion of a memorandum of understanding for the resumption of the Office's activities in Burundi.

Turning to the humanitarian aspect, we support the call made a few minutes ago by Ambassador Lauber with regard to his contact with the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, UNHCR and the Burundian authorities. We also underscore the fact that the human rights situation was discussed at the Human Rights Council in Geneva in September, with that body adopting two key resolutions on the issue. Full respect for the human rights of all Burundians is a necessary condition for holding an inclusive and credible political dialogue and for establishing an environment conducive to the organizing and holding of peaceful and democratic elections in 2020.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Burundi.

Mr. Shingiro (Burundi) (*spoke in French*): On behalf of my delegation, I would like to begin by sincerely thanking you, Mr. President, for having convened this meeting on the situation in Burundi. I would also like to warmly congratulate your country, Italy, on its assumption of the rotating presidency of the Security Council for the month of November. You, Mr. President, can always count on the full support of my delegation throughout your mandate, which you have conducting with professionalism and great attentiveness since the beginning of the month.

I welcome the presence among us of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General, the former interim President of Burkina Faso, Mr. Michel Kafando. Through you, Mr. President, I would like to thank him for the presentation of his report on his recent field visit to Bujumbura. I would also like to thank my colleague Ambassador Jürg Lauber, Chair of the Burundi configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission, for his report and, in particular, for his personal involvement in the peacebuilding process in Burundi for several years.

The purpose of my intervention is to share with members of the Council the new positive developments in Burundi since the previous meeting of the Council in the Chamber in July (see S/PV.8013).

On the political front, the inter-Burundian dialogue continues smoothly. A new round of talks is planned in the next few days in Arusha. Contacts at the highest level through the Special Envoys have intensified in recent days. President Yoweri Museveni of Uganda, who, as the Council knows, is in charge of mediating the dialogue process, has dispatched our colleague Ambassador Adonia Ayebare, his Special Envoy, from Uganda to Burundi to meet the national authorities. He was first received by the Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation in Bujumbura, the capital, and then by the Head of State himself, in the interior of the country. The exchanges between the two parties were fruitful. For his part, the facilitator of the Inter-Burundian dialogue, Mr. Mkapa, held productive consultations on 7 November in Kampala with Mr. Yoweri Museveni, President of Uganda and mediator of the inter-Burundian dialogue. We would like to recall that Mr. Mkapa received a visit from the Ombudsman in September in the context of consultations aimed at the resumption of the dialogue.

In the same vein, the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General, who is with us this morning, recently made his second visit to Burundi and the region, during which he held open and productive discussions with national officials. During his stay in Burundi, the Special Envoy received a warm welcome, with a tropical flavour, and full cooperation from national authorities at all levels.

In the same vein, at the initiative of the Chair of the Burundi configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission, who is here today, Ambassadors of the greater subregion of Southern Africa met at an informal work lunch meeting. At the end of the meeting, participants agreed on the following points.

First, they agreed that the people of Burundi and the region itself must maintain leadership in managing the situation in Burundi. The contribution of other actors outside the region should be limited solely to supporting national and regional efforts.

Secondly, they agreed on the importance for the international community continuing to support Burundi's socioeconomic sectors.

Thirdly, they called for the mobilization of the necessary resources for the organization of free, democratic and peaceful elections in 2020.

Fourthly, they called for support for national and regional efforts in the search for a lasting political solution to the current situation through peaceful means.

Fifthly, they called for the lifting of the economic sanctions of the European Union against Burundi, which have a negative impact not only on the lives of vulnerable groups, such as women and children, but also on the implementation of the Agenda for Sustainable Development and, above all, on the creation of an environment conducive to holding the next elections in 2020.

My delegation hopes that, with the current positive momentum, our partners that have adopted sanctions and punitive measures against Burundi can move in the direction of general peace in Burundi and lift such counterproductive sanctions.

As you can see, Mr. President, regional dynamics remain vibrant. In order to safeguard such regional momentum, it would be desirable to avoid any attempt to create parallel mechanisms that are likely to alter the current trajectory of the dialogue. It must remain first and foremost under the leadership of Burundians and the subregion. The contribution of outside actors, although commendable, should be limited only to support. As much as possible, actors beyond the region must — and this is very important — be careful about taking unilateral decisions and positions of a political nature that undermine the efforts of the East African Community in the management of the Burundian question. That wish was expressed by the Heads of State of Uganda and Tanzania during their bilateral meeting on 11 November in Kampala.

When it comes to strengthening democratic culture, we remain convinced that in a country like ours, which is still making efforts to consolidate peace, justice and security, free, peaceful and transparent elections are an essential part of consolidating the voice of the people in outlining their future. Any alternative of access to power through unconstitutional shortcuts is unacceptable. The coups that we have seen in the past remain for most Burundians a nightmare from which they are trying to wake up today.

Since 2005, there has been a gradual consolidation of the democratic culture in Burundi. In order to cement that culture throughout the country, the President of the Republic has urged all of the country's forces — all 32 Burundian political parties, people from all religious denominations, civil society, the media and the youth — to act as messengers of peace by strengthening security for all and encouraging peaceful coexistence, social cohesion, reconciliation and national unity.

With regard to constitutional affairs, my delegation wishes to recall that the amendment of the Constitution is an exercise that is exclusively a matter of national sovereignty, not only for Burundi but also for the countries represented here in the Security Council. The issue is the responsibility of Burundians and should not be the subject of debate by external actors in a non-Burundian context. I would like to remind the Council that the current exercise is aimed, first at foremost, at Burundi's long-term stability through an end of the transitional period of our basic law of 2005.

The Constitution of 18 March 2005 has not yet undergone any changes, even though it sets out outdated provisions that are unsuited to the post-transition context and the East African Community Treaty, which Burundi has ratified. Therefore, the committee responsible for proposing amendments has examined the constitutional provisions that are the source of imperfections in maintaining, as they are, provisions that have the merits and democratic values that guarantee stability and peace in Burundi, the protection of the political opposition, the protection of the rights and interests of minorities, the protection of the independence of certain institutions and, above all, the legitimacy of the constitutional order. Almost all the achievements of the Arusha agreement, which are already in the current Constitution, such as ethnic and gender quotas, will be safeguarded.

With regard to the security situation, the situation on the ground since the Council's most recent meeting on Burundi in July is very positive (see S/PV.8013). The security situation is generally good throughout the national territory, and citizens go about their daily activities peaceably. From the most distant hill to the capital of Bujumbura, calm reigns. Burundians, in their rich diversity, enjoy their political and civil rights without any hindrance.

The return to normalcy was recognized and emphasized by the seventh Ordinary Summit of the Heads of State of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, which took place on 19 October in Brazzaville. I would mention that that meeting, which included 19 countries, mostly business people, decided to hold its next summit in Bujumbura. That is

an illustration of the emerging regional confidence in our subregion.

In the area of human rights, my country, Burundi, remains convinced that any progress in the area of human rights must be through dialogue, cooperation, the mechanism accepted by all as the Universal Periodic Review and the strengthening of the national capacities of all the relevant stakeholders in the field. Unfortunately, the growing tendency towards the politicization of human rights to satisfy the political interests of some States is hampering the efforts of many countries, including Burundi. Human rights are a universal concept that is amply outlined in several international instruments. It constitutes one of the three pillars of the United Nations. But human rights are increasingly being abused by some States, which, if they are not careful , are deviating from the objectives of the Human Rights Council. Those objectives were mandated to it by the General Assembly when it was created on 15 March 2006 and fortified during the establishment of the mechanism of the Universal Periodic Review on 18 June 2007.

Regrettably, some members have become accustomed to achieving the adoption of resolutions by the Human Rights Council, and other mechanisms established by it, to advance hidden agendas in carefully targeted countries, while turning a blind eye to massive human rights violations in countries under their protection. It cannot be said enough that politicization, selectivity and double standards, which are starting tobecome blatant in the specific case of Burundi, constitute real hindrances in the process of promoting human rights. The international community therefore should break from that counterproductive stance and address the suffering of the peoples of the world with the same level of attention, and with no other geopolitical considerations.

With respect to national reconciliation, the Government of Burundi, under the leadership of President Pierre Nkurunziza, established the Truth and Reconciliation Commission as part of the last phase of the establishment of the institutions provided for in the Arusha agreement in 2000. The members of the Commission have been called upon to move quickly to inform Burundians about the successes and failures of the past, with a view to saying goodbye to the political-ethnic antagonisms that have marked the dark history of our country, and thereby build a bright future for present and future generations. The Commission has already done an excellent job to date, and it deserves the support of the international community to bring its task to a successful conclusion.

On 8 November, the Chair of the Burundi configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission, who is here with us, emphasized the importance of lending support to the national reconciliation process. Furthermore, the National Assembly adopted a bill few months ago on the functional role of the national council for unity and reconciliation. The new council will work towards unity, equity and reconciliation of the Burundian people and will also be at the forefront in promoting positive values in our country.

With regard to the return of refugees who fled the country for various reasons — which is of great importance — the Government of Burundi continues to call on refugees to return to help build a peaceful, stable and prosperous Burundi. The seventh Summit of Heads of State and Government of the International Conference of the Great Lakes Region, which brings together 12 countries and took place on 19 October in Brazzaville, made an enrgetic appeal to the countries of the region that welcomed Burundian refugees to facilitate their voluntary return to their native country. And for those who do not wish to return to their country immediately, for one reason or another, the Summit itself urged host countries to resettle them far from common borders, as stipulated in the 1951 Convention relating to the status of refugees.

It is similarly very important for the host countries that have generously welcomed Burundian refugees to respect the civilian nature of the refugee camps, in accordance with the requirements of the same Convention and the various appeals of the Council. Those present are aware that the repatriation of refugees is a guarantee of subregional stability, now that among those who have fled, some, including minors, have been recruited, trained, supervised and subsequently enrolled in rebel movements against Burundi. All of that is in flagrant violation of the Charter of the United Nations and other relevant conventions; the related report of Council is available to the public.

The voluntary repatriation movement continues at a satisfactory pace with the arrival of several thousand citizens who had fled to Tanzania. More than 100,025 Burundians repatriated themselves in 2016, with more than 68,000 up to 15 August, and 7,549 officially after the tripartite meeting held from 29 to 31 August.

According to the planning of that meeting, at least 13,000 refugees will have been officially repatriated from the neighbouring countries of Burundi between 7 September to 31 Dece nber. To recap, we estimate that from 2016 to today, more than 175,000 refugees have already returned to their country voluntarily. To encourage the voluntary return movement, the Minister of the Interior paid a working visit to the refugee camps in Tanzania from 15 to 17 November. At the end of his visit, the observation was that more than 40,000 refugees in Tanzania, including 26,000 in the Nduta camp, hd registered to voluntarily return to Burundi before the end of the year.

With regard to cooperation between Burundi and the United Nations, that is a subject of paramount importance for partners here. Burundi, just as the members of the Council, maintains the same commitment to strengthen and enhance its relations with the United Nations, in strict respect of its sovereignty and the free will of Burundians, within the framework of its political future. In order to ensure the United Nations presence in the human rights sphere, the draft cooperation agreement with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights is being discussed between the two parties and is in its final phase. In the case of the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General, both parties have agreed to designate ad hoc teams to negotiate and finalize a cooperation agreement. The Special Envoy mentioned that before my statement.

In conclusion, my delegation wishes to reiterate once again that Burundi has, for more than two years, been subjected to disproportionate political and diplomatic pressure, which intentionally obscures the progress already made and has led to the unjust double-standard treatment over other Member States of the United Nations. That long-standing attitude must cease and give way to fair and equitable treatment. We know that all is not perfect here as elsewhere, but we remain convinced that it is not possible to resolve political misunderstandings by intensifying pressures through political reports and declarations. Burundi is not asking for preferential treatment — far from it. It simply asks that it be treated on its merits and in accordance with the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter and of international law.

Moreover, I must say that, thanks to the renewed peace and undeniable control of the situation on the ground, Burundi is not a threat to international peace and security. Based on that observation, the Security Council should consider in the near future to remove Burundi from the list of countries that are on its agenda, so as to address other areas of recent emerging tensions.

The President: There are more names inscribed on the list speakers. I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on the subject.

The meeting rose at 11.55 a.m.